

Florida Horse Moves Into Spotlight, Warms Annville Farmer's Cold Winter

Peace Rules' Success Radiates Rays All The Way To Pa.

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ANNVILLE (Lebanon Co.) — Blair Minnich's words, "I just fell into this," may be the most succinct way of describing his life for the past several months.

Minnich, who has boarded horses at his farm in Annville for 18 years, has watched a financially-stressed winter warm into a prosperous spring.

With the recent horseracing success of Florida-born Peace Rules, owners and breeders in the Thoroughbred world began searching for the foal's parents — and found the mare on Minnich's farm in Annville.

His mare, Hold To Fashion, a horse that had previously been a part of Minnich's fiscal problems, suddenly skyrocketed in worth.

Peace Rules

Peace Rules proved he could run, said Minnich, by winning stakes races in California, then coming east to win the Louisiana Derby (beating Derby and Preakness winner Funny Cide in the process) and the Bluegrass Stakes.

A horse qualifies to be in the Kentucky Derby by the amount of money winnings, "which is why they (owners and trainers) want to win the prep races," he said. Only the top 18 or so colts or fillies run in the Derby.



This picture, taken in May 2002, shows Hold To Fashion and her filly, a daughter of Forest Wildcat.

of the triple crown races. He was edged out to finish third in the Kentucky Derby and nosed out to finish fourth in the Preakness.

The colt checked in with victories on both turf and track and caught the attention of trainer Bobby Frankel and Edmund and Bernice Gann, who bought the colt as a 2-year-old at a Saratoga sale.

Peace Rules' sire, "Jules," died of colic eight days before the Preakness. The stallion was the leading stud in Argentina at the time, and with the dawning success of his son, his owners were planning to bring him back to the U.S., said Minnich.

Jules' stud fee of \$6,000 is modest in comparison to the \$500,000 commanded by stallion Storm Cat, for example.

Lifetime Farmer

Born into a family that operated an Ayrshire dairy in Lehigh County, Minnich found his way to the racetrack because his brother was a trainer at Penn National Race Course.

Minnich has also retired from Pennsylvania Power and Light, but in addition to working for PP&L, he operated his own crop and horse farm in Lehigh County.

Eighteen years ago he moved to his Lebanon County farm, where he boards horses and keeps several Thoroughbreds to race at Penn National, Philadelphia, Delaware, and Maryland.

The operation includes 25 acres and approximately 16 of Minnich's own horses. He boards 15-20 horses at one time, however

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Three-year-old Peace Rules and his stablemate, Empire Maker, were the only two horses that earned more than \$1 million this year and thus qualified the colts for the Derby.

Peace Rules has been among the top contenders in the first two

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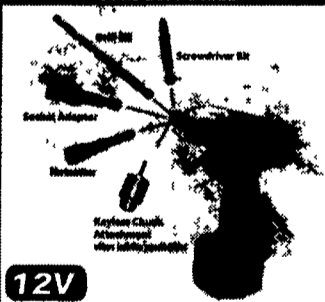
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